TOWN OF ARLINGTON

Report of Planning Board 1919

REPORT OF PLANNING BOARD

For the Year 1919

Organization

At the annual Town Meeting held last March, Mr. H. B. S. Prescott was elected a member of the Planning Board to fill the vacancy caused by the declination of Judge James P. Parmenter to run again for this office. Subsequently Mr. Prescott was elected Vice-Chairman.

The other members of the Board are Henry W. Hayes, Chairman; Harry G. Porter, Cyrus E. Dallin, Robert W. Pond.

Jacob Bitzer was again appointed to serve as Secretary.

Roll of Honor

The most important and interesting problem considered by the Board this year was the question of the location of a Roll of Honor to contain the names of the Arlington boys who served our country in the war with Germany.

Early in the year, Mr. Cyrus E. Dallin submitted a model of a Roll of Honor which was approved by the Board.

At the last annual Town Meeting it was voted that the Planning Board be appointed a Committee with full authority to erect a Roll of Honor on the green adjacent to the easterly side of the Town Hall, the money to be raised by popular subscription.

Shortly after this Town Meeting, the Board received sharp criticisms of the location decided upon, from many interested citizens. After a careful investigation and discussion of the criticisms, the Board decided that it would be wise to again submit this question to the Town for further consideration.

With this end in view the Board made a progressive report to the special Town Meeting held December 11, 1919. In that report the Board suggested that the erection of a Roll of Honor

be deferred until such time as the local post of the Legion has acquired a home. This home, in the opinion of the Board, would be the logical location for a Roll of Honor.

The Board also suggested that a memorial to the soldiers who died in the service be placed in the vestibule of the Town Hall. It is the intention of the Board to present the whole subject for further consideration to the next annual Town Meeting.

Building Lines on Main Thoroughfares

Since the year 1915, the Planning Board has annually urged the Town to establish building lines on through streets, as this is the only method by which the Town can secure the possibility of future widening in these thoroughfares without prohibitive expense and can prevent the encroachment on existing open spaces.

The Board has called to the attention of the Joint Board the necessity of establishing building lines on Massachusetts Avenue and also on Medford Street. The persistency of real estate promoters in erecting one-story stores and garages close to the sidewalk line ought to be checked at once. Therefore, the Board again urges immediate action by the Town.

Cities and towns that have established building lines have found them to be of great value in promoting proper development and the much dreaded civil suits for damages, as many prophesied would be the case, have not been filed in the courts. Building lines, when established, have proved to be a betterment rather than a damage.

The Board quotes from the 1916 report the following section:

"We believe that this Act provides a means for making necessary widenings with the least expense to the Town and the least hardship to the owners of property. It will be observed that the imposing of a building line does not take away the right to use one's land except for building purposes. Lawns, shrubbery, walks and fences may be kept irrespective of the building line. It is hardly more than a notice to the owner that some time in the near or distant future a front strip of his land, varying from a few feet to forty feet (limited by the Act to twenty-five feet), depending upon the necessity, may be taken for highway purposes, and until that time the strip is to be kept

clear of substantial structures which would be costly to remove. There is nothing new in the principle of the Act. A set-back restriction is very commonly found in residential property of good class. In many of the streets of Winchester there are such set-backs. The only difference is that, instead of being a private restriction and enforceable only by the owners of lots which are affected thereby, it becomes a public regulation enforceable by the Town. The Act has been adopted in the cities of Boston, Cambridge, Lynn, Medford, Newton, Quincy, Revere, Springfield, Woburn, and towns of Brookline, Dedham, Milton, Norwood, Watertown, Winchendon.

"It has been used in the metropolitan district by the Town of Watertown, which during the last two years has placed a building line on several of its streets, and by the City of Quincy, which has established a fifteen-foot set-back for one thousand feet on School Street, one of the important thoroughfares of the town. In both Watertown and Quincy no damages have been claimed by property owners, who are evidently content to wait until their land is actually taken for a physical widening of the street."

Sucker Brook Improvement

The improvement of Sucker Brook has been brought forward by the Board with the idea of doing the work in connection with the construction of the Metropolitan Sewer. Owing to present-day conditions the construction of this sewer will probably be postponed for some years, meanwhile the Town might gradually improve the banks of the brook.

The Town deposits an ever increasing amount of material washed from the streets and carried through storm drains to the bed of the brook. This deposit causes the water to overflow the lands of abutting owners and creates unhealthful and unsightly conditions. A gradual improvement of these conditions would not be burdensome. A start should be made this year on that section of the brook lying between Grove and Mill Streets. The banks of the brook in this section are largely owned by the Town and the draining of the land would result in giving an extended area for playground purposes on the High School grounds, and a possibility would be created of building a swimming pool and skating rink.

Cross Street from Central to Mystic Streets

Plans for this cross street are now on file at the office of the Town Engineer and have been approved by the Planning Board. The Town has authorized the Selectmen to petition the Superior Court for the appointment of a special commission for the elimination of grade crossings. As the elimination of the grade crossing and the building of the street are so closely allied, the whole matter is deferred until the Commission is appointed.

Playground at the Heights

The need of a playground at the Heights is becoming more apparent as the population increases.

The Town three years ago made an appropriation of $800 for the purchase of land for this purpose, but no suitable location was found available and the matter has been allowed to drop.

According to the program of the School Committee, a Grammar School will be erected on Forest Street and a Junior High School on the Crusher lot. If this is done, a playground in the vicinity of these two schools becomes a public necessity. There are three locations which might well be considered in solving this problem.

First: A playground could be developed on the lower level of the Crusher lot which is owned by the Town, without interfering with the use of the rest of the lot for school purposes, essentially as reported by the Committee on Junior High School building.

Second: A tract of land owned by Charles S. Peirce and located at the corner of the State Highway and Forest Street. This is a level lot and would not cost a great amount of money to develop.

Third: The old Hobbs Pond property, together with the land owned by Howard S. Russell, could be develped into an ideal playground, with a swimming pool for the summer and a skating rink for the winter. This location has been a playground for the children of the neighborhood for a generation and could be preserved as such at a moderate expense.

Other Projects

Numerous projects for the development of the Town are constantly brought to the attention of the Board, many of which have had to be laid aside owing to the fact that the money necessary to carry them out cannot yet be made available. The suggestions made by the Board in this report are for projects that are necessary and not overburdensome.

Schools

The problem of housing the school children of the Town is receiving the careful consideration of the School Committee, as their report to the Town Meeting of December 11 has indicated. The Board is of the opinion that the locations proposed are well considered and will probably meet the present and future needs of the Town.

Conclusion

While building operations are still checked by abnormal conditions and the growth of the Town somewhat retarded, it is a favorable time to plan for future growth so as to be prepared when conditions again become normal to develop the Town in a manner that will reflect credit upon her citizens of today and receive the approval and appreciation of future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

HENRY W. HAYES, *Chairman.*
H. B. S. PRESCOTT, *Vice-Chairman.*
HARRY G. PORTER,
CYRUS E. DALLIN,
ROBERT W. POND.